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Friday, 19 May 2006, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Ikouebe	(Congo)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. D'Alotto
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Nana Effah-Apenteng
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Kitaoka
	Peru	Ms. Tincopa
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Whineray
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Manongi
	United States of America	Ms. Wolcott Sanders

Agenda

The situation in Chad and the Sudan

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06-35453 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Chad and the Sudan

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Chad, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Ahmat Ibrahim (Chad) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Egeland to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Egeland: Thank you very much, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Council on my visit to the Sudan and Chad between 6 and 11 May.

What I saw in Darfur and in eastern Chad drove home how much is really now at stake. The next few weeks will be absolutely critical for millions of lives in this region. With the Darfur peace agreement, signed the day before I arrived in the Sudan, there is finally real hope that we are turning the corner. But we could also still enter a downward spiral that would pull millions even further into the abyss. The alternative to peace could be catastrophic. With even more violence and attacks, the humanitarian operation could not be sustained and relief workers would have to withdraw. Malnutrition and mortality rates would again multiply — in some areas within weeks, not months.

With so much at stake, all of us will regret it if we fail to do everything we can right now to achieve the immediate goals on which we all agree: implement the peace agreement and bring on board those who have not signed it, immediately and substantially strengthen the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS), take concrete steps to accelerate the transition to a United Nations operation and make sure that the humanitarian lifeline to more than 3 million people is secure and funded.

The alternative to peace and reconciliation is what I saw in the Gereida area in South Darfur: massive displacement, constant violence, attacks against civilians, and a few humanitarian organizations struggling to provide relief to more and more people. The number of displaced in Gereida has tripled in the past four months, with current estimates ranging between 100,000 and 120,000. Recently arrived internally displaced persons (IDPs) with whom I spoke gave harrowing accounts of attacks on their villages by Government forces and militias only 12 days prior to my visit. In fact, on 14 May, after I left, an armed militia attacked another village southwest of Gereida, as confirmed by AMIS. Reports of attacks on villages in other areas of Darfur are still reaching us almost every day.

As more and more people arrive in Gereida with little or nothing to sustain them, the humanitarian community is only barely able to meet the rising needs and is confronted with constant access problems. The main road from Nyala has to be declared "no-go" for extended periods, and local government authorities have been blocking fuel deliveries for bore holes and water pumps. Nevertheless, the International Committee of the Red Cross, Oxfam and another non-governmental organization (NGO), ZOA, are managing to provide food, water and other relief, and the World Food Programme (WFP) and two additional NGOs are planning to start operations in the coming weeks.

It was too early to tell what the impact of the peace agreement on the ground would be. The local representatives of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) with whom I spoke in Gereida, who are part of the Minawi faction, told me they accepted the peace agreement despite some reservations. Senior Government officials with whom I spoke seemed fully committed to the implementation of the agreement and eager to turn the page.

At the same time, however, a string of demonstrations have been taking place against the peace agreement in IDP camps in all three Darfur states. In several instances, the demonstrations have turned violent and have resulted in casualties, including in Kalma, in South Darfur; in Zalingei, in West Darfur; and in Abu Shouk, in North Darfur. The most troubling aspect of several of those demonstrations has been the targeting of unarmed AMIS personnel and compounds inside the camps. A particularly tragic incident occurred on 8 May, the day I visited the Kalma camp. The AMIS police compound in the camp was attacked and systematically looted, and a Sudanese AMIS language assistant was brutally murdered. Given the systematic nature of the looting, it is believed that the attack on the AMIS compound was well planned and coordinated in advance.

The incident in Kalma underscores the fact that new and better security arrangements have to be put in place for the camp. Discussions are ongoing in that regard, particularly regarding the future involvement of Government police.

In a positive development, when I met with the Governor of South Darfur, he agreed that the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) could return to Kalma as camp coordinator — a decision also confirmed to me by Second Vice-President Taha. The speedy return of the NRC will not only help to lower tensions in what has been the largest and most volatile camp in Darfur, but also allow the much-needed preparations for the approaching rainy season to start. They are essential to avoid epidemics, flooding, the blocking of access and the destruction of infrastructure. Every day counts, as time is running out. An outbreak of cholera in Kalma would be a nightmare scenario for the 95,000 inhabitants of this crowded camp as well as for the population of nearby Nyala.

I also hope that AMIS civilian police can return quickly to Kalma and to several other camps from which it has had to withdraw in the last few days. I welcome the appeal by Mr. Abdel Wahid of the SLA, calling for restraint and calm. I also welcome the response of the many sheikhs and youth leaders who apologized for the numerous incidents during the demonstrations.

The role of AMIS is more important than ever. AMIS needs a new and stronger mandate for protecting the population, patrolling dangerous areas, building confidence and helping to implement the peace agreement. It cannot be right that so many of these courageous men and women serving with AMIS have not even been paid their salary for two months. AMIS has to be supported and strengthened immediately to give it the capacity and credibility to do its job. As the Secretary-General said to the Council last week (see S/PV.5434), we cannot afford to lose a single day.

A stronger and larger AMIS presence will also help establish the kind of secure environment in which IDPs will be able to return home. Plans have been in place for some time to support returns, and some Government officials seem eager for this process to be accelerated, even prematurely, before the upcoming rainy season. But we must ensure that all returns occur voluntarily and in safety and dignity, in full compliance with international standards. Well-established mechanisms are now in place between the Government, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in this respect, which we should use and build upon. We hope that conditions will be in place that would allow significant returns between the end of the coming rainy season and the planting season in the spring of 2007.

When I briefed the Council one month ago, access restrictions and funding shortfalls were threatening the viability of our humanitarian operation in Darfur, the largest single operation on Earth. While that remains true today, I also have some positive developments to report. First, regarding access restrictions, both the Minister for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Kosti, and Vice-President Taha gave me assurances that the previously agreed moratorium on restrictions for Darfur would now be fully implemented. They also agreed that procedures for humanitarian organizations had to be clear and predictable, which today they are not. Since then, a policy statement has been issued by the Vice-President declaring the Government's intention to ensure fuller

humanitarian access to Darfur. Furthermore, after our meetings, the Humanitarian Ministry and the Aid Commission convened a gathering with NGOs in Khartoum with the stated purpose of opening a new chapter of cooperation. NGOs were also invited to work with the Government in the drafting of new rules and regulations to implement the feared and restrictive NGO law. These rules should ensure that national and international NGOs can carry out their activities freely and effectively, and in accordance with international human rights standards.

These are encouraging initial steps. But to resolve the daily administrative nightmares we face, they now have to be translated into real changes in the way national and local authorities deal with humanitarian organizations and staff, in particular the Humanitarian Aid Commission and national security authorities. To implement the moratorium, I take for granted that visas and stay permits (which are valid until the end of January 2007) will be issued to NGO staff, as was initially agreed. The Government should also lift the many other access restrictions listed on the fact sheet we provided to Council members during my last briefing, including those restrictions for work in eastern Sudan. This includes the application of the agreement between the Government and the United Nations to allow freedom of movement to all United Nations staff. The refusal by the Government to implement the relevant provisions of the agreement is having increasingly dire consequences, particularly in the east where essential relief activities had to be suspended. It would be very timely and important for the upcoming Security Council mission to the Sudan to review these humanitarian access issues with the Government.

Secondly, another positive development is the number of new contributions that have reduced the grave funding shortfall for Darfur from 80 per cent to 60 per cent in recent days. Most important, the World Food Programme will be able to avert at least some of the ration cuts for Darfur as a result of several generous pledges, including an additional 47,000 metric tons from the United States Government, a purchase of 35,000 metric tons through internal loans against an expected pledge from the European Commission, and 20,000 metric tons being contributed by the Government of National Unity of the Sudan. I had appealed for this contribution from the Government of Sudan in my meetings with Vice-President Taha and Minister Kosti and want to express my appreciation for their prompt action. This is the first pledge by the Government of the Sudan to the United Nations appeal since the beginning of the Darfur crisis. It sends a positive signal at this important moment, and provides urgently needed relief to Sudanese citizens.

Together, these contributions of cereal will help to increase the rations from 1,050 kilocalories to 1,770 kilocalories per person per day until August. However, additional funding is still needed for other essential items in the food basket, such as sugar, salt and pulses. And even the additional cereal contributions are not enough to carry us through to the next harvest at the end of October. The World Food Programme still needs an additional 53,000 metric tons of cereals for September and October to cover the entire "hunger season", as it is called locally. Given the four-month lead time for food deliveries, additional pledges are needed now, not in one or two months.

Overall, we still face a shortfall of $389 million for Darfur alone. During my visit, I could see the impact these shortfalls are having on our operations, particularly those of United Nations agencies and many smaller NGOs. Feeding centres have had to be closed, food cannot be distributed, staff is being reduced, teachers in camps are no longer being paid and many IDPs no longer have access to free health care in hospitals. I hope the Government will consider filling some of those gaps, particularly the payment of teachers' salaries and fees for health services. Following the findings of my mission, I have also approved a Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) grant of $21 million to cover the most urgent additional needs resulting from the most recent wave of displacement in recent months, which is not covered by the work plan that we issued in November of last year for 2006.

We also urgently need new and substantial contributions from donors for the rest of the Sudan. The total shortfall under the work plan for 2006 amounts to $983 million. Many vital sectors have received less than 20 per cent of their funding. Humanitarian programmes in southern Sudan are still only 17 per cent funded. I want to appeal especially to those donors that have so far contributed much less than they did last year, and to donors in the Gulf region that have a particular interest in the Sudan.

I also came back from the visit with an even greater sense of admiration for the thousands of humanitarian and AMIS colleagues on the ground. Their commitment to work in the most difficult conditions and under constant threat to their personal safety is truly awe-inspiring. The attacks against relief workers have been relentless and are threatening our operations in many areas. Our staff, compounds, trucks and vehicles are being targeted, literally on a daily basis. In El Geneina alone, there were seven armed incidents against NGOs in three weeks. The Government urgently has to ensure law and order in areas under its control, as I discussed with Vice-President Taha. All rebel factions and militia groups have to stop hijacking vehicles and attacking relief workers.

Large areas throughout Darfur are inaccessible to us as a result of those direct attacks and the continuing fighting, as can be seen from the map that we distributed. In many parts of West Darfur, we have had no — or only very limited — access since last December. NGOs are using every available means to distribute food and other supplies, including through food committees and donkey convoys. But nowhere near enough assistance is getting through, and the hunger season is approaching. The few sources of food and income left to the local population are threatened by militias that burn crops, continue to steal livestock and continue to abuse women collecting firewood.

Let me turn now to the situation in Chad. As I was able to see during my visit to Abéché and Goz Beida, the threats against relief workers and the civilian population in eastern Chad are at least as serious as those in Darfur. A total of 24 vehicles have been hijacked from humanitarian organizations in eastern Chad in the past few months alone. Only two weeks ago, a UNICEF colleague was shot and almost killed in Abéché. As we speak, staff at the French military hospital are fighting to save her arm. All of these attacks are being committed with total impunity. As a result of the insecurity, United Nations agencies and NGOs have been forced to reduce staff and programmes in many areas, at a time when needs are continuing to increase, particularly those of the 50,000 new internally displaced persons.

Severe funding shortfalls are also a major constraint, with only 25 per cent of the required $179 million funded to date. I am considering a CERF request that has just been submitted by the Humanitarian Coordinator, but we urgently need additional donor contributions for the operation in Chad.

Another major concern in eastern Chad is the targeting of refugees and IDPs, including children, for recruitment by various armed groups. This is undermining the civilian and humanitarian character of the camps, and further increases their vulnerability to attack. The displaced and the civilian population are also being threatened by militia and rebel attacks and by the almost total lack of law and order in the area. One group of IDPs I spoke with at the Gouroukoun site near Goz Beida had been attacked three times before deciding to flee the villages. One indication of the lawlessness in eastern Chad is the fact that at least 13,000 people have fled from Chad to Darfur in recent weeks to escape the fighting and the attacks.

The humanitarian colleagues I spoke to during my visit expected the situation in eastern Chad to deteriorate further, rather than improve in the coming weeks. At the same time, President Deby made it very clear to me that the Government lacked the capacity to ensure the security and protection of the civilian population in eastern Chad and of the humanitarian organizations that are there to assist them. That means that we are confronted with a very dangerous vacuum that is being filled by rebels, militias and others, leaving civilians, IDPs, refugee camps and relief workers utterly exposed.

Something has to be done urgently to prevent a scenario in which more and more civilians are attacked and displaced, refugee camps become increasingly militarized and potentially embroiled in the conflict, and relief workers have to be withdrawn. A number of options could be considered, including assistance to the Government of Chad to enable it to meet its security responsibilities. Humanitarian organizations have also been employing more Chadian security staff themselves. But we also have to consider other security arrangements now, before the situation become much worse. Such an arrangement could help make refugee and IDP areas more secure and enhance the safety of humanitarian workers. The High Commissioner for Refugees is developing various options in that regard.

In Darfur and eastern Chad, humanitarian relief constitutes a lifeline for close to 4 million people. Attacking relief workers or impeding their work means attacking that lifeline. If relief workers have to pull

out, hundreds of thousands of lives are put at risk. Those attacking our colleagues not only violate fundamental norms of humanitarian law, they also endanger the lives of millions of their fellow citizens. Impunity for the attacks has to stop, and the attacks themselves have to stop.

Lastly, I want to thank the Security Council for the re-energized attention that is has been paying to the critical situation in Darfur and eastern Chad. The Council's attention will remain crucial, as the next few weeks will be make or break. We can turn the corner towards reconciliation and reconstruction, or see an even worse collapse of our efforts to provide protection and relief to millions of people. All of us have to do whatever is in our power to make sure that we finally turn the corner to a better future.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Egeland for his briefing.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.